

## Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 SAB-01 PM-03 SP-02

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO NAVFAC ELEUTHERA IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 203782

LIMDIS

E.O. 11 52:GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PN

SUBJECT: PANAMA

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS AND AMBASSADOR JORDEN FROM  
BELL

1. TACK ANNOUNCED AT LIMA YESTERDAY THAT ELEMENTS OF THE  
82ND AIRBORNE DIVISION HAVE BEGUN SIGNIFICANT AMPHIBIOUS  
AND AIR OPERATIONS IN THE ZONE. NO DETAILS. BUT THE  
CLEAR IMPLICATION WAS THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS THREATEN-  
ING PANAMA.

2. I TOLD GONZALEZ-REVILLA THAT I HAD TO "ASK VIGOROUSLY"  
FOR A "CLARIFICATION" OF THE MINISTER-NEGOTIATOR'S INTENT  
AND FOR ANY FACTS PANAMA HAD TO SUBSTANTIATE ITS CASE -  
WHATEVER THAT MIGHT BE. WAS PANAMA DELIBERATELY TRYING TO  
DISTURB THE PEACE AS THE NEGOTIATIONS WERE RESUMING?  
GONZALEZ ALREADY KNEW OF THE EPISODE, AND SAID TORRIJOS  
HAD INSTRUCTED TACK BY TELEPHONE TO MAKE THE STATEMENT.  
HE EXPLAINED THAT TORRIJOS FEELS THAT UNITED STATES FORCES  
IN THE ZONE HAVE INTENTIONALLY BEGUN TO WITHDRAW FROM THE  
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NORMAL LIAISON AND COORDINATION OF ACTIVITIES WITH THE

NATIONAL GUARD LEADERS; THAT THEY ARE, PROBABLY WITHOUT INSTRUCTION FROM HIGHER AUTHORITY, UNDERTAKING "CONTINGENCY" OPERATIONS IN ORDER TO SCARE PANAMA; AND THAT THEY ARE IN

OTHER WAYS DELIBERATELY PROVOKING "INCIDENTS" WITH PAN-AMERICAN CIVILIANS AND GUARDSMEN.

3. I REPLIED THAT WHILE WE AS YET HAD NO FACTUAL INFORMATION, I THOUGHT THAT WAS SO MUCH NONSENSE.

4. I REMINDED HIM THAT PANAMA HAS ALWAYS TENDED TO MIS-INTERPRET OR BLOW UP OUT OF ALL PROPORTION ANY ACTIVITIES, CIVILIAN OR MILITARY, IN THE ZONE WHICH IT DOES NOT FANCY BUT WHICH HAPPEN TO BE CONSISTENT WITH OUR DEFENSE AND OPERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THE EXISTING TREATY. I ASKED AGAIN FOR IMMEDIATE "CLARIFICATION" AND PANAMA'S "FACTS."

5. GONZALEZ TALKED WITH TORRIJOS, WHO DID A LITTLE BACKING DOWN AND, AT THE SAME TIME, SHOWED AN UNUSUAL SPARK OF STATESMANSHIP. "WE SHOULD ALL RECOGNIZE," GONZALEZ QUOTED HIM AS SAYING, "THAT MUTUAL INCOMPREHENSION IS GOING TO CAUSE US PROBLEMS UNTIL THERE IS A NEW TREATY. THE PLAIN FACT OF THE MATTER IS THAT NORMAL MILITARY ACTIVITIES IN THE ZONE ARE, BY THEIR NATURE, ANTI-PATHETIC TO PANAMA'S POLITICAL REALITIES." HE ADDED HE DID NOT WANT TO PRESENT ANY "FACTS" BECAUSE HE DID NOT WANT TO GET INTO "AN EXCHANGE OF ACCUSATIONS." RATHER, HE WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS THE PROBLEM WITH DEPUTY SECRETARY CLEMENTS, GENERAL BROWN AND YOU NEXT WEEK.

6. FINALLY, GONZALEZ SAID, TORRIJOS WANTED US TO KNOW - SO THAT THERE WOULD BE "NO SURPRISES" BETWEEN US, AT LEAST ON PANAMA'S SIDE - THAT HE WAS ORDERING "200 UNITS" TO CONDUCT "PARALLEL MILITARY OPERATIONS" NEXT WEEK. "NATURALLY THEY ARE SIMPLE TRAINING EXERCISES," GONZALEZ SAID.

7. I SAID THAT OUR SENIOR OFFICIAL VISITORS NEXT WEEK WOULD OF COURSE WELCOME ANY EXPRESSIONS FROM THE GENERAL

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ON THIS MATTER, AND THAT WE WOULD "NOTE" THE "PARALLEL OPERATIONS."

8. EARLY THIS MORNING A NATIONAL GUARD OFFICER TELEPHONED ME DIRECT FROM PANAMA TO CONFIRM THAT WE HAD RECEIVED TORRIJOS' MESSAGE AND INQUIRE WHETHER IT WAS "SATISFACTORY. I SAID IT WAS.

9. COMMENT: ALL THIS MEANS THAT PANAMA IS VERY, VERY SKITTISH THESE DAYS. SOME OF THAT IS FINE -- IT IS USUALLY TO OUR NEGOTIATING ADVANTAGE TO KEEP THE PANAMANIAN SOMEWHAT UNSETTLED. BUT TOO MUCH SKITTISHNESS MAKES FOR A

DEEPENING OF NATURAL SUSPICIONS WHICH, IN TURN, DISTURBS THE CLIMATE FOR NEGOTIATIONS. I BELIEVE THAT IT WILL BE REALLY USEFUL FOR THE CLEMENTS PARTY TO HAVE A FRANK TALK WITH THE GENERAL ON THIS SUBJECT. IT WILL AT LEAST CLEAR THE AIR. GONZALEZ TELLS ME, BY THE WAY, THAT TORRIJOS IS QUITE FLATTERED BY THE PARTY'S DESIRE TO PAY A COURTESY CALL ON HIM, AND IS ANXIOUS TO TALK, THOUGH QUITE INFORMALLY, ON CONTADORA. I EXPECT THE GENERAL WILL TRY TO EXPLOIT THIS HIGH-LEVEL VISITATION TO HIS PERSONAL DOMESTIC ADVANTAGE, BUT THAT DOES NO HARM AND WE COULD NOT STOP IT IN ANY CASE. INGERSOLL

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